Acting Edition

The Fifteen Minute Hamlet

by Tom Stoppard

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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THE FIFTEEN MINUTE HAMLET

The first performance of The (Fifteen Minute) Dogg's Troupe Hamlet was on the terraces of the National Theatre, South Bank, London, on Tuesday, August 24th, 1976. Presentation was by Inter-Action Productions, with the following cast of characters:

MARCELLUS, BERNARDO, LAERTES, HORATIO (Scenes One, Three, and encore)	Pat Barlow
FRANCISCO, OSRIC, FORTINBRAS, GRAVEDIGGER, GHOST, HORATIO (Scene One)	Paul Filipiak
OPHELIA	Jane Gambier
GERTRUDE	Katina Noble
HAMLET	John Perry
SHAKESPEARE, CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS	Phil Ryder

The play was directed by Ed Berman

The action takes place at a shortened version of Elsinore Castle

PROLOGUE

SHAKESPEARE *enters and bows.*

SHAKESPEARE For this relief, much thanks.
Though I am native here, and to the manner born,
It is a custom more honoured in the breach
Than in the observance

Well.

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
To be, or not to be, that is the question.
There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy—
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will.

Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.
I must be cruel, only to be kind;
Hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature,
A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

Lady in audience shouts "Rotten".

The lady doth protest too much.
Cat will mew, and dog will have his day!

He bows again and exits.

Scene One

A castle battlement. Thunder and wind. Two guards, **BERNARDO/MARCELLUS** *and* **FRANCISCO/HORATIO** *enter.*

BERNARDO/MARCELLUS Who's there?

FRANCISCO/HORATIO Nay, answer me.

BERNARDO/MARCELLUS Long live the King. Get thee to bed.

FRANCISCO/HORATIO For this relief, much thanks.

BERNARDO/MARCELLUS What, has the thing appeared again tonight?

FRANCISCO/HORATIO Peace, break thee off: look where it comes again. *(He points off left)*

BERNARDO/MARCELLUS Looks it not like the King?

FRANCISCO/HORATIO By heaven, I charge thee speak!

BERNARDO/MARCELLUS *(he points and looks left)* 'Tis here.

FRANCISCO/HORATIO *(he looks centre)* 'Tis there.

BERNARDO/MARCELLUS *(he looks right)* 'Tis gone.

FRANCISCO/HORATIO But look, the morn in russet mantle clad
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.

BERNARDO/MARCELLUS Let us impart what we have seen tonight
Unto young Hamlet

They exit.

Scene Two

A room of state within the castle. A flourish of trumpets as **CLAUDIUS** *and* **GERTRUDE** *enter.*

CLAUDIUS Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green

HAMLET *enters.*

our sometime sister, now our Queen,
Have we taken to wife.
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

HAMLET A little more than kin, and less than kind.

CLAUDIUS *and* **GERTRUDE** *exit.*

O that this too solid flesh would melt!
That it should come to this—but two months dead!
So loving to my mother: Frailty, thy name is woman!
Married with mine uncle, my father's brother.
The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth
The marriage tables.

HORATIO *rushes on.*

HORATIO My lord, I think I saw him yesternight—
The King, your father—upon the platorm where we watched.

HAMLET 'Tis very strange.

HORATIO Armed, my lord—
A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET My father's spirit in arms? All is not well.
Would the night were come!

HAMLET *and* **HORATIO** *exit to the parapet.*

Scene Three

The castle battlements at night. There is the noise of carousing, cannon, fireworks. **HORATIO** *and* **HAMLET** *appear on the parapet.*

HAMLET The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse.
Though I am native here and to the manner born,
It is a custom more honoured in the breach
Than in observance.

There is the sound of wind.

HORATIO Look, my lord, it comes. *(He points)*

The **GHOST** *enters.*

HAMLET Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Something is rotten in the state of Denmark!
Alas, poor ghost.

GHOST I am thy father's spirit.
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET Murder?

GHOST The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET O my prophetic soul! Mine uncle?

The **GHOST** *exits.*

(to **HORATIO***)* There are more things in heaven and earth
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

HORATIO *exits.*

Hereafter I shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on.
The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right!

HAMLET *exits.*

Scene Four

A room within the castle. There is a flourish of trumpets, leading into flute and harpsichord music. **POLONIUS** *enters and immediately* **OPHELIA** *rushes on.*

POLONIUS How now, Ophelia, what's the matter?

OPHELIA My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber, Lord Hamlet with his doublet all unbraced, no hat upon his head, pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, and with a look so piteous, he comes before me.

POLONIUS Mad for thy love?
I have found the very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

HAMLET *enters as* **OPHELIA** *exits.*

Look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.
What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET Words, words, words.

POLONIUS Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.

HAMLET I am but mad north northwest: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

POLONIUS The actors are come hither, my lord.

POLONIUS *exits.*

HAMLET We'll hear a play tomorrow.
I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions.
I'll have these players play something
Like the murder of my father before mine uncle.
If he but blench, I know my course.
The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

Pause.

To be, or not to be *(He puts a dagger to his heart)*

CLAUDIUS *and* **OPHELIA** *enter.*

that is the question.

OPHELIA My Lord—

HAMLET Get thee to a nunnery!

OPHELIA *and* **HAMLET** *exit.*

CLAUDIUS Love? His affections do not that way tend
There's something in his soul.
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood.
He shall with speed to England.

CLAUDIUS *exits.*

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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